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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HELSINKI 000228

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/IET, EUR/NB AND INR/EAP

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [EAID](#) [ASEC](#) [ID](#) [FI](#)

SUBJECT: ACEH TALKS: FINNISH MEDIATORS POSITIVE AFTER DAY 2

REF: A. STATE 28557

[1](#)B. JAKARTA 02068

[1](#)C. HELSINKI 0185

[1](#)D. JAKARTA 01596

[1](#)E. HELSINKI 0127

[1](#)F. STOCKHOLM 086

[1](#)G. JAKARTA 0564

[1](#)H. JAKARTA 0414

[1](#)I. STATE 05915

[1](#)J. JAKARTA 0380

Classified By: ACTING POL CHIEF DAVID ALLEN SCHLAEFER FOR REASONS 1.4 (B AND D)

A Possible Breakthrough

[1](#)1. (C) Poloff spoke with Meri-Maria Jaarva of the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) on the night of February 22. Jaarva is the chief assistant of former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari for the Aceh talks. Jaarva said that there had been an "enormous change" in the demeanor and attitude of the GAM representatives from Monday (Day 1) to Tuesday (Day 2). She said that the GAM's position was so hardline on Monday that she and Ahtisaari were unsure if the GAM representatives would actually show up Tuesday morning or if they would break off the talks. She had gone so far as to begin preparing contingency points for the press in the event of a break down. However, the GAM representatives arrived Tuesday prepared to immediately discuss substantive issues and details about what a comprehensive settlement in Aceh might look like. They were prepared to drop (in effect) their demand for eventual independence as well as their insistence on negotiating a series of staged or trached measures (beginning with a cease-fire) rather than discussing a comprehensive settlement all at once. Jaarva said that she did not know what had happened during the night of Feb. 21-22 to account for the dramatic shift; she speculated that the GAM negotiators may have received the approval or support of field commanders to move forward, but was unsure.

[1](#)2. (C) The most important development was agreement between the GAM and the GoI on the semantics of autonomy. Jaarva said that the GAM representatives told the GoI side that the phrase "special autonomy" was pejorative for their supporters and a non-starter; it would be impossible to sell an agreement based on "special autonomy" to certain key GAM figures outside the talks. After some discussion, the alternative formulation of "self-government inside Indonesia" was agreed on. The GoI's initial "special autonomy package" would still be the starting point for negotiations, but the new semantics would be used henceforth. Jaarva said that she believed this would allow the GAM negotiators to claim to their supporters that they had not sacrificed "independence" for "autonomy." Jaarva expressed surprise with media reports that GAM "Prime Minister" Malik had publicly stated the GAM was dropping its demand for independence; she said that she did not believe the GAM representatives in Helsinki would want such reports reaching their supporters at this stage.

Areas of Discussion

[1](#)3. (C) Jaarva said that the negotiations had then moved on to short but substantive discussions of a number of key areas that would have to be resolved as part of any comprehensive settlement.

-- Political Parties: The GoI did not want to change its electoral system to allow "separatist" political parties to legally operate, but recognized that some way would have to be found for the GAM to form a party(ies) and participate in municipal and provincial elections and politics. There were a number of ideas on both sides about how this might be achieved.

-- Timing of Elections

-- Amnesty for GAM leaders and fighters

-- Economy and Taxation: The two sides discussed how revenues would be shared, and what type of auditing system could be put in place to verify equitable distribution and prevent malfeasance.

-- Reintegration of fighters into Indonesian society

-- Security: Disarmament and "decommissioning" of GAM military formations.

-- Human Rights Issues: Jaarva said that there was an extensive discussion of various human rights issues, as well as some discussion of ongoing humanitarian relief efforts in the wake of the tsunami.

-- Monitoring of Agreement: Both sides agreed that there would have to be an external monitoring body put in place for an extended period. Both sides were unenthusiastic about the UN being the basis for such a monitoring body. There seemed to be a consensus that a regional organization or "something with the Australians and Americans" would be preferable to the UN.

Next Steps: Tentative agreement was reached to hold a third round of talks in Helsinki from April 12-17 (Note: Jaarva was unsure that she had the exact date range correct). She said that the longer gap was necessary to allow both sides to prepare position papers on the various issues, to consult with legal and political advisors, and, in the case of the GAM, to win acceptance from key GAM commanders for the concept of a settlement.

Outside Influence?

14. (C) Jaarva told Poloff that the American Aceh activist Neeson was not/not present in Helsinki because he had become ill at the last moment and canceled his trip. However, she said that Kingsbury and "another Aussie woman (sic)" were with the GAM representatives as political advisors. The two Australians did not participate in the negotiation sessions, but appeared to play an active role in the intra-GAM deliberations. Jaarva said that she did not know if the role they were playing was benign or malign as far as facilitating agreement, or if they played any role in either the hardline stance the GAM took on Monday or the overnight change that subsequently took place. Jaarva also said that there were two other foreign advisors, a German and a Swede, that unexpectedly appeared with the GAM representatives. Jaarva said that Ahtisaari thought it impolitic to refuse them admission into the estate where the talks were being held, and that although they were "poking around" the site, they did not insinuate themselves into the talks and appeared "harmless."

Christensen Upbeat

15. (C) DCM Weisberg also received a late call from Juha Christensen, the Finnish businessman who originally brought Ahtisaari into the process as a mediator. Christensen has been present during the talks and actually participated in at least some of the negotiation sessions. Christensen told the DCM that he was optimistic after Day 2 and cited the same change in the GAM's demeanor that Jaarva had. Christensen opined that he believed a breakthrough might indeed have been achieved. Christensen declined to go into further details over the phone, but agreed to meet with the DCM later this week to discuss his impressions.

Day 3

16. (C) CMI mediators indicated that the talks on Wednesday (Day 3) would focus on preparing the agenda for the April round. Ahtisaari plans to give a press conference at 3:00pm local time (8:00am EST) on Wednesday. Ahtisaari's official statement on the talks will be posted to the CMI website (www.cmi.fi) at some point on February 23.

WEISBERG